

**For discussion
on 4 May 2018**

Legislative Council Panel on Security

**Strengthening Hong Kong's
counter-terrorism preparedness and public education**

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on Hong Kong's latest counter-terrorism ("CT") landscape and the HKSAR Government's efforts in strengthening CT preparedness and public education.

Background

2. In recent years, terrorist activities around the globe and their trend have been changing and diversified modus operandi have evolved (e.g. organized and large-scale "jihads" have shifted to "lone-wolf" attacks by individual radicals), imposing grave challenges to security and safety worldwide, including Hong Kong. The Government has been assessing the threat level of Hong Kong being subject to terrorist attack, which is now "moderate", meaning that there is a possibility of attack but there is no specific intelligence suggesting that Hong Kong is likely to be a target. That said, in order to cope with unexpected challenges, the HKSAR Government has been on full alert to guard against terrorist attacks and keep strengthening CT capability and preparedness.

3. Instead of a local challenge of any single region, CT efforts are a common concern in the international arena. Highly cooperative prevention and response at various levels are required. The HKSAR Government has been closely monitoring and making reference to CT-related resolutions passed by the United Nations ("UN") Security Council and latest advice or guidance released by different international organizations (such as the World Customs Organization and the International Criminal Police Organization, etc.) from time to time; as well as proactively monitoring measures (such as the launch of a comprehensive CT platform) adopted by other regions which are exposed to higher risks, with a view to keeping Hong Kong's CT preparedness updated with changing needs.

CT preparedness

4. The HKSAR Government is committed to maintaining Hong Kong as one of the safest cities in the world. The overall CT strategy is featured by the following four major elements –

- (a) Prevention: adopting an intelligence-led approach to enhance communication and cooperation between departments as well as among departments and public/private organisations and to protect critical infrastructures, with a view to suppressing and preventing terrorist activities or related threat in Hong Kong;
- (b) Preparedness: conducting drills and training to maintain high vigilance and to ensure that emergency and support service personnel are well prepared, sufficiently trained and equipped with necessary resources;
- (c) Response: formulating effective response action plans to tackle and investigate terrorist activities or related threat in a professional, effective and efficient manner; and
- (d) Recovery: ensuring in case of terrorist incidents in Hong Kong that law and order are maintained and that community recovery, restoration and reconstruction can be promptly carried out to restore social order and rebuild public confidence as soon as possible.

5. To ensure that Hong Kong’s CT capability and preparedness are adequate and will be enhanced continuously, the Government will, starting from 2018-19, provide relevant disciplined services with an additional allocation amounting to a full-year recurrent provision of \$265 million, including the resources for setting up an Inter-departmental Counter-terrorism Unit (“ICTU”), strengthening CT coordination and related law enforcement work, etc.

ICTU

6. Under the coordination of the Security Bureau (“SB”), the ICTU was set up on 23 April 2018, with an initial deployment of 43 officers from six disciplined services, i.e. the Hong Kong Police Force (“HKPF”), the Immigration Department (“ImmD”), the Customs and Excise Department (“C&ED”), the Correctional Services Department (“CSD”), the Fire Services Department (“FSD”) and the Government Flying Service (“GFS”). The ICTU, led by a Senior Superintendent of Police directly accountable to the

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Operations), provides an inter-departmental CT platform on top of the existing CT framework to enhance coordination and analysis of CT intelligence and information, and coordination among various departments on areas outside the ambit of such emergency coordination teams as the Counter Terrorism Emergency Coordination Team and the Standing Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Planning Group. The ICTU is dedicated to monitoring the global terrorism trend and CT measures, reviewing and improving CT strategies in Hong Kong, developing specialized CT training, optimizing various emergency response plans, etc. Apart from enabling closer contact and smooth collaboration among departments, the ICTU platform is expected to, more importantly, achieve synergy in such aspects as CT intelligence, training and emergency response education for comprehensive and holistic consideration of the overall CT deployment.

7. There is a co-working space for officers of the ICTU at the HKPF. If necessary, relevant officers will return to their respective departments for work that has to be prepared, handled or executed by the individual departments. The ICTU will formulate relevant CT strategies and implementation plans as soon as possible to prepare for various risk situations.

CT law enforcement network

8. Optimized CT efforts require a comprehensive CT law enforcement network webbed by different posts, involving multi-faceted law enforcement, increased manpower and mutual collaboration among various disciplined services. The HKPF is a key backbone agency on CT and is supported by its various response units including Emergency Units, the Police Tactical Unit, the Airport Security Unit, the Counter Terrorism Response Unit (“CTRU”) and the Special Duties Unit (“SDU”) (or the Flying Tiger Squad). There are also permanent special expert teams in place, including the Police Negotiation Cadre, the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Bureau (“EODB”), the Key Points and Search Division, and the Critical Infrastructure Security Coordination Centre (“CISCC”) which constantly enhances and upgrades the security and safety standards of major infrastructures. In recent years, the Police have vigorously strengthened CT training of frontline officers on “Immediate Tactical Intervention (ITI)” to ensure that those arriving earliest at the scene are capable of making swift responses to provide members of the public with immediate care for the sake of their safety. The ImmD and the C&ED continue with immigration and import/export control under the risk-management approach and, according to the law, intercept persons and cargoes suspected of involving terrorist activities. The FSD and the GFS are

important forces for handling terrorist attacks and responding to emergency incidents. Drawing on overseas experience, the CSD will strengthen CT work in penal institutions.

9. On equipments, various disciplined services regularly review their own CT needs and monitor the latest technology development for timely procurement of suitable equipment (such as the C&ED's ion scanner and portable spectroscopic equipment, the Police's modular vehicle barrier and radiological detector, etc.).

CT legislation

10. In addition to deployment readiness in operational response, an effective legal framework is essential to combating terrorist activities. The United Nations (Anti-Terrorism Measures) Ordinance (Cap. 575) ("UNATMO") is one of the most important legislations on CT in Hong Kong. Under the UNATMO, the Government has implemented measures on prevention of terrorist acts, including publishing in the Gazette a notice of persons or organizations designated by the UN or specified by court proceedings as terrorist or terrorist associate, freezing terrorist property, prohibiting supply of properties or weapons to terrorists, prohibiting recruitment to terrorist organizations, etc. Effective since 2002, the UNATMO has been operating smoothly and evolving to catch up with the international standards and the need of the overall CT landscape. The latest legislative amendment proposals were passed by the Legislative Council on 21 March 2018, with a view to further implementing the UN Security Council Resolution 2178 and recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force to combat the threat posed by travels of foreign terrorist fighters and enhance the mechanism of freezing terrorist property.

11. In addition to the UNATMO, a series of criminal ordinances is in place to tackle various crimes related to terrorist activities. For example, prosecution of offences involving manufacture of explosives is instituted under the Crimes Ordinance which imposes heavy sentences upon conviction. Besides, local legislations including the Offence against the Person Ordinance, the Firearms and Ammunition Ordinance and the Organized and Serious Crimes Ordinance also provide against various acts related to terrorist activities or related crimes.

Emergency rescue

12. As for emergency rescue, the FSD examines its resources from time to time to ensure adequate manpower resources, advanced equipment and related

professional training for carrying out firefighting and rescue operations in incidents related to terrorist attacks. For example, in October 2017, the FSD set up the HazMat Support Unit to enhance operational efficiency of the HazMat Team in responding to terrorist attacks and strengthen training of frontline personnel and team members. The HazMat Support Unit, comprising members of the HazMat Team who have received additional overseas training, is mainly responsible for providing frontline firefighting and ambulance personnel as well as other team members with professional training in handling incidents involving hazardous materials and those involving chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear agents. The HazMat Support Unit will also be deployed to render on-scene technical support to frontline personnel and teams members and provide the incident commander with professional advice, including risk assessment, hazard assessment, decontamination management, setting up of hazard control zones, safety assessment of on-scene personnel, etc.

Drills

13. In the past five years (2013-2017), the Police conducted a total of 333 CT and major incident contingency exercises, mostly joint exercises participated by different departments and public organizations. Moreover, the Police have been proactively working with relevant government departments and organizations to conduct CT drills. To test CT responsiveness and coordination capabilities of various departments and organizations, 21 large-scale CT drills were conducted in 2017. An inter-governmental CT drill, codenamed “Wildeagle”, was conducted at the Hong Kong Coliseum in December 2017 with over 500 participants, including officers from the CTRU, the SDU, the EODB, the Organized Crime and Triad Bureau, the FSD, the GFS, etc. It was also the first drill which involved public participation, with over 100 members of the Junior Police Call and Senior Police Call taking part in the field drill. If circumstances permit in the future, the Police will consider inviting the public to participate in drills again to enhance their CT awareness. Besides, the Police will actively explore the possibility of inviting private organizations to take part in the drills, so as to ensure that various sectors of the community have the opportunity to experience how they can effectively respond to terrorist attacks and other emergencies.

Public education and community responsiveness

14. In the unfortunate event of an incident, one of the key objectives is to

reduce public casualty, which hinges on public education and cooperation from members of the public. The SB, the HKPF and the FSD have regularly promoted safety knowledge and anti-crime awareness among the public via websites and social media. For instance, the HKPF released in September 2017 a survival handbook entitled “Run, Hide and Report” to remind the public of the three essential actions to be taken when encountering an attack –

- (a) Run: to run out of the attacker’s line of sight and leave the scene via a safe route; and more importantly, refrain from staying at the scene for taking photos or videos but leave immediately to avoid danger.
- (b) Hide: if it is impossible to leave the attack scene, hide at a sheltered place or in a lockable room, and then mute the mobile phone and turn off the vibration function as soon as possible. Refrain from using any items that can give out light or sound to avoid drawing the attacker’s attention. Stay calm and wait for police rescue.
- (c) Report: if successfully escape and being far away from the attack scene or when personal safety is secured, call the police reporting centre at 999 for assistance.

In addition to the handbook, the Police have also produced a video clip to illustrate more vividly how to deal with an attack on one’s own, stay calm and take the three-step approach of “Run, Hide and Report” as appropriate in the actual circumstances to ensure personal safety.

15. Separately, in 2018-19, the FSD will re-organize the existing Community Relations Section to form a new unit for introducing new elements into public education on fire prevention and ambulance service, so as to enhance public awareness of emergency preparedness, strengthen self-help capability and survival skills of members of the public in emergencies such as terrorist attacks or disasters, and promote their better understanding of dangerous goods, hazardous materials, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, automated defibrillation, etc. The FSD will also take the initiative to provide organizers of major events with professional advice on formulation of emergency response and escape plan in a bid to strengthen their emergency responsiveness. The FSD will make use of various online social platforms to expand the public education network, encourage greater participation of young people, and disseminate instant messages during emergencies through such channels as social platforms and digital media for facilitating the public to obtain the latest information about the emergencies and preventing the spread of rumours.

16. As regards community responsiveness, the CISCC, the Cyber Security Centre and the CTRU of the Police will continue to maintain close liaison with relevant public/private organizations and stakeholders, with a view to enhancing CT responsiveness, awareness and capabilities of these organizations and the public through such means as daily contact, security talks and security advice.

Conclusion

17. The HKSAR Government will, as always, endeavour to stay vigilant at all times for proactive prevention and keep enhancing Hong Kong's CT capability and preparedness to ensure a long-term safe environment.

Security Bureau
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